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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2147
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2012
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 2583
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STATE FOR SCA/CEN AND NEA/IR, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/25/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [TX](#)
SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: MFA OFFICIAL ON TURKMEN LIFE AND
CULTURE

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Sylvia Reed Curran. Reasons: 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) In a conversation with emboff during an Iftar event that Charg hosted on September 25, the MFA's Chief of Protocol described what he called the "unique" character of the Turkmen as compared to other peoples in the region. He said that unlike the Azerbaijanis, for example, whom he said were "just like the Iranians: Emotional, temperamental and easily agitated," Turkmen by nature are peaceful and non-confrontational. It is for this reason, he said, that Turkmenistan has enjoyed such prolonged peace and stability, while other countries in the former USSR and the region have had turmoil and armed conflict. He said that the most important values shared by all Turkmen are devotion to family and hospitality towards outsiders.

¶3. (C) The official advised emboff to travel out of Ashgabat, visit and become acquainted with all parts of Turkmenistan, including his own town near Balkanabat. He went on to emphasize that he himself is not of the Teke clan, but rather of the Nokhor. (NOTE: Late President Nyazov was a member of the Teke clan, as is President Berdymuhamedov and the majority of high-level officials in Turkmenistan. END NOTE.) He said that the Nokhor are very different from other Turkmen clans, and are descendants of Alexander the Great, which, as he explained, accounts for his own tall stature and large eyes.

¶4. (C) Our interlocutor said that he is delighted with the spacious flat that he and his family live in. The building, in the fashionable Ashgabat suburb of Berzengi, was constructed by the government specifically for MFA officials. He talked happily about the 30-year mortgage and low monthly payments he was able to secure in the luxury apartment. Talking about his children and naming conventions in Turkmenistan, he said that babies are always given compound names like "Separmurat" or "Gurbanguly" (his own young son is named "Gurbanmurad"), but then called a totally different nickname by their families in order to ward off jealousy and the "evil eye" (the logic being that it is more difficult to wish ill on someone without knowing their actual name).

¶5. (C) The official said his work has taken him to nearly 20 countries in the world, most recently to a protocol-related training in Malaysia, a country where he was shocked to see that people routinely address others simply by their first names, with no honorifics like "Janab" or "Agha" (Sir), as in Turkmenistan. Likewise, he noted that certain areas of Turkmenistan invariably use the formal (Siz) form of the second person pronoun, even with siblings, whereas in others, nothing but the informal pronoun is used with others.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Tribal affiliation in Turkmenistan is an extremely sensitive issue, and it is interesting that our interlocutor volunteered the information. We also found interesting that even with his very cosmopololitan demeanor and travel to many different countries, he is still very much grounded in Turkmen culture. END COMMENT.
CURRAN